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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Allegheny Power issues holiday lighting safety tips

Greensburg, Pa., November 27, 2002—The holidays are a happy time and sparkling lights and decorations add a cheerful touch to the holiday, but Allegheny Power reminds everyone that checking electric lights and decorations before installation can help ensure a safe holiday season.

"Holiday lights are beautiful and fun, but there are some important safety steps to take when installing them," said Roger Heasley, Director, Safety, Environmental, and Building Services for Allegheny Power. "Most people just bring their lights out of storage and plug them in. But, a careful inspection each year should be the first step in the installation process, reducing the chance of a house fire that could turn holiday joy into tragedy."

Do not assume that because the lights worked last year that they are in good working condition and that they shouldn't be inspected this year. When inspecting the lighting, look for frayed wires, damaged sockets, or missing insulation, and if you find any of these conditions, throw the lights away. When purchasing new lighting, you can reduce the possibility of electrical shock or fires by checking for the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label before stringing lights and setting up other decorations. Equally important is to use lighting according to the manufacturer's specifications—indoor lights for indoor use only and outdoor lights for outdoor use.

In addition to visually inspecting holiday lighting and decorations, Allegheny Power offers the following holiday safety tips:

- When installing outdoor lights, use only lighting and other electrical decorations certified for outdoor use.
- Carefully inspect each decoration before plugging into an outlet. Cracked sockets, frayed, loose, or bare wires, and loose connections may cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items with new decorations.

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- Always unplug a light string or electrical decoration before replacing light bulbs or fuses.
- Don't mount or support light strings in any way that might damage the cord's wire insulation. Never nail or staple light strings or extension cords.
- Practice this rule of thumb: do not connect more than three push-in bulb light string sets together. Light strings with screw-in bulbs should have no more than 50 bulbs connected together.
- Don't overload extension cords — it could cause the cord to overheat and start a fire.
- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water and well protected from weather.
- Don't allow children or pets to play with light strings, candle lights, or other electrical decorations. Even small light decorations can produce a deadly electric shock if they are misused.
- Turn off all electrical light strings and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.
- Plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable GFCIs can be purchased wherever electrical supplies are sold.
- When hanging lights outside, around your house, or in trees be sure to survey the area for overhead power lines and maintain at least a 10-foot distance.

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